

Cosmogony and Folk Beliefs

were expected to receive special consideration on arriving in the eternal home beyond the sun. Mortal wounds or mortal illness vanished at death, leaving the victim free of their effects in the after world. But the spirit of the bad, the lazy, the coward, or the thief would be driven before the Great Spirit into a region that was barren, cold, and desolate, with rugged and sterile mountains infested with noxious animals and insects. There game was scarce, meager, and unsavory, and the soul had to wander through thorns and among rocks, thirsty, hungry, and in pain. 775

Our own Comanche informants revealed no such notions at all. Nor do the Shoshones have any such conception of post-mortem immanent justice. We suspect these assertions should be taken with a grain of salt, if not rejected.

Believed limitations of immortality included loss of scalp, strangulation, death in the dark, and mutilation. If the scalp were taken after death, the Comanches looked on life as annihilated. A scalp removed before death, whether by accident or design, affected immortality not in the least. To preserve the scalp on the head of a dead comrade was of more consequence than the preservation of one's own life; while by the same token, scalping a foe was of much greater merit than simply sending his spirit out of this world into the next, whence it would eventually return to plague the Comanches anew. "Dot" Babb says the Comanches did not scalp a Negro since they believed he had no soul, but they might kill him to prevent his killing Comanches. But the dance leader's scepter, given to Ralph Linton in 1933, had several scalp symbols on it—tokens of scalps taken by its original owner—and a couple of them (colored differently) were pointed out to represent Negro scalps. [829]●

Fear of strangulation arose from the belief that life (spirit or "soul thing") issued from the mouth at the moment of death. Thus if death occurred through choking, the passageway was closed and the spirit, unable to free itself, remained in the mortal body and was forever imprisoned in the ground at burial. Next to fear of strangulation came the fear of death in the dark, for the spirit that left the body in the dark might be unable to find its way to the after world and thus wander forever in darkness. Although the majority believed that mortal wounds or mortal illness vanished at death, there were some who [763]

The Comanches on the White Man's Road

omy.¹ Probably one-third of the Comanches refused to sign the treaty and accept reservation life. But after the failure of the Quaker Peace Policy, the government embarked upon an aggressive military campaign that resulted in the total defeat of the Comanches in the early autumn of 1874. [648] [657]

The Comanches began life on the reservation politically, economically, socially, and spiritually bankrupt. Traditional culture patterns were no longer applicable. The chiefs could no longer maintain control. Without opportunity to hunt and to raid there was no means by which the men could attain social rank and prestige; the social system was frozen. Religious and moral concepts seemed valueless; their medicine had failed them. The buffalo were quickly slaughtered, leaving the Comanches without a source of supplying themselves with food, clothing, shelter, or other necessities. [177] [178] [554] [829] [129] [825]

The Comanches were expected to pass within the span of a single lifetime from the age of stone to that of steam. They were to accept the white man's language, his legal and moral codes, his religion, his food, his clothing. They were to build houses, schools, and churches, to purchase farm equipment and livestock, to improve their allotments, and learn to farm. It was a big assignment. Obviously, considerable capital was necessary for significant progress.

The cultural change was too rapid and too great for simple solution. For some there was no problem; they simply refused to take the white man's road and in an effort to resurrect the past, tried the sun dance, the ghost dance, and peyote—all in vain. A few farsighted individuals had realized from the first that there was no alternative for the white man's road. Reluctantly, the disillusioned began to take it. Favorable economic conditions made the transition easier.

Meanwhile, land hungry "Boomers" made stronger and stronger demands on the government to open the reservation. They argued that the lands were not being used. One [648]

1. Charles J. Kappler (comp.), *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, 87 Cong., 1 sess., Sen. Doc. 462 (8 Vols.; Washington, 1903), II, 877 ff. [113]

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THE COMANCHES

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[ca. 1870]

he was carried into the white man's country and that they gave him to a great monster, with wings, that lived upon the mighty waters at the place where the sun rises, and it had flown away with him. This was a long time ago. 'Our people think white men had medicine.'

The Comanches believe in a Supreme Being, and in many minor deities—that is, in the manifestation of a supernatural power in the operations of nature. Their religious ideas, if such a term may be allowed, are of the vaguest character. They bury their dead, with great secrecy, and place in their graves weapons and food. They believe in the immortality of man, and picture a fair paradise beyond the boundary of time. They have few ceremonies of a religious character. For the dead, they offer prayers at the rise of the sun. With their faces turned toward the rising orb of day, over the graves of their departed friends, they set up a howl sufficient to strike terror to the heart of one unaccustomed to hear them. They are not a happy people. Like all aborigines, they are grave, taciturn and moody.

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Lyon's Kathairon

*For Preserving and Beautifying the Human Hair, to Prevent
Its Falling Out and Turning Gray.*

A well preserved Head of Hair, in a person of middle age, at once bespeaks refinement, elegance, health and beauty. It may truly be called Woman's Crowning Glory, while men are Not insensible to its advantages and charms. Few things are more disgusting than thin, frizzly, harsh, untamed Hair, with head and coat covered with dandruff. Visit a barber and you feel and look like a new man. This is what LYON'S KATHAIRON will do all the time. The charm which lies in well placed Hair, Glossy Curls, Luxuriant Tresses, and a Clean Head, is noticeable and irresistible.

Missouri Republican, November 8, 1872

- 657 States Government failed to take into consideration many difficulties peculiar to the Texas Indian situation as well as the inherent characteristics of the plains tribes not found in the Indians of other regions.

Establishing the Reservation

The question of a permanent home for the Indians of Texas was often raised during the decade following annexation; but the problem was difficult to solve, especially since the state maintained that neither the Indians nor the United States had any property rights in the Texas public domain. Under the terms of annexation the state had shifted to the Federal Government the responsibility of managing the Indians but had retained her public lands. Thus, the savages were regarded as tenants at will and in its effort to keep them pacified the United States Indian service had to contend with the steady encroachment of the settlers.

- 178 Naturally the misery and poverty of the savages increased
511 from year to year and the problem of restraining them grew
657 proportionately greater. The following words are given as those of
Ka-tem-e-see, a Southern Comanche chief:

178 Over this vast country, where for centuries our ances-
829 ters roamed in undisputed possession, free and happy,
[224] what have we left? The game, our main dependence, is
killed and driven off, and we are forced into the most
sterile and barren portions of it to starve. We see nothing
but extermination left us, and we await the result
with stolid indifference. Give us a country we can call
our own, where we may bury our people in quiet.²

- 657 East of the Comanches, along the valleys of the upper Brazos
101 and Trinity rivers, were Caddo, Anadarko, Kichai, Haini, Tawa-
koni and other Indians whose condition was quite as desperate as
657 that of the Comanches. Finally after one or more "location" bills
had failed, the Legislature of Texas by an act of February 6, 1854,
authorized the Federal Government to select not more than twelve
leagues of land to be used for Indian reservations.³ Captain Ran-

[113] 2. Horace Capron, United States Indian Agent in Texas, to Howard, Septem-
ber 30, 1853. Ms., in the University of Texas Library, photostat copies of papers
in the United States Indian Office.

[113] 3. H. P. N. Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, III, 1495-1496.

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C Within a small peyote group will exist enormous differences in dis-
K tance to be travelled. Two cars in a family will frequently distort
401 the picture. The occupation of an individual will to a great extent
determine the amount of travel time available regardless of the amount
of interest in visiting, peyote, or pan-Indian affairs in general.
Also, individuals who must commute long distances to a steady job
will rack up high speedometer readings without spending much time
visiting, etc. In fact, I have even observed some Comanches with
widely dispersed kin and friends spending more time visiting than
many Kiowas whole families live within a two mile radius. In spite
of this, I still feel that the travel pattern of the Comanches and
Kiowa is considerably different from that of the neighboring whites.
Just how it can be measured or accurately described, however, I do
not know.

C Turning now to the kinship organization, it is safe to say
R that the same complexity due to individual variations is to be found.
601 Moreover, the attitudes toward change color the data given by infor-
829 mants. In this way the father of a family that has kept its kinship
177 patterns (relatively speaking) may be convinced that the old system
602 has disappeared entirely. The converse may also be the case.

C The concept of the ideal pattern has been preserved by all
K the /33/ older people I have met, Kiowa, Comanche; mixed bloods,
[563] Christians and Peyotists. The pattern does not seem to be directly
[191] affected by inte-marriages except insofar as the mixed marriage may
change the dominant language of the family. The actual behavior
C patterns are changing in many respects. One of the chief factors is
K the small size of the tribe (Comanche in this instance) which has
601 forced marriages to occur within the exogamous group to an extent.
177 Strictly tabu marriage have occurred both among the Kiowas and
602 Comanches but these are still recognized as wrong and the participants
[167] are stigmatized. The sanctions are not as sever as the traditional
[582] ones, however.
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C If the present factions are not determined by the accultura-
K tionist vs. traditionalist split, the split still exists in the realm
665 of value judgement. Exactly what role it does play must be examined
still further. The differences between the Kiowas and Comanches
seem to be continuances of earlier pre-contact differences. But to
pursue this is to get onto very precarious ground.

C Conversations on the subject of the factioning with informants
K both Peyotist and Christian yield two conflicting views. One is that
665 there has always been factionalism and that the tribes will never learn
829 to cooperate unless things unforeseen come to pass. The other is that
the older generation, now inactive, was not plagued by the dissension
which exists among the leaders today. Arguments may be advanced to
support both theories.

C As far back as the history of the tribes can be traced there
K are stories of splits and dissensions. The Comanches recall that
648 they were once Shoshones. The stories of the split vary but generally
179 it is believed that there was some disagreement. The Kiowas also
101 have a tradition of a northern origin and a split although it is more
648 difficult to reconcile with what the books say. According to the older
179 Kiowas, the Crows and Kiowas were once the same people. They maintain
101 that they can understand the Crow language fairly well and there is
K considerable visiting between the two groups today. In pre-reservation
665 days dissensions and splits did not paralyze the activities of the
621 tribe. People could split off from one band and join another. The
C success of tribal life did not depend upon cohesion and cooperation.
K But with the advent of the reservation and settlement in one place
648 with sustained relations with the United States government this
665 tendency to split became more and more painful. One could not move
621 for one thing. And the dealings with the outside world demanded a
concerted effort on the part of the tribes to achieve success.

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According to the other view such earlier factioning is recognized but felt to be unimportant. It is maintained that the unity of the tribes was not impaired until during the past four or five years. The older men were sensible and had great integrity. But the age group most active today are the product of a period in which people learned to lean on the government. These men, so the argument runs, are weaklings because they have been able or even allowed, to solve something for themselves. In other words it is a "lost generation" theory of sorts. The remedy for this state of affairs would be for a withdrawal of the Indian Service from virtually all areas of Indian life. /37/It is felt that a sink and swim period would be painful but would ultimately make the Indian self sufficient.

One is led to consider a view which explains present phenomena in the light of earlier cultural conditioning as well as one which attempts to explain in terms of exterior factors acting upon the community in the recent past. The ruminations of the informants on their own problems are not far from the thought processes of the anthropologist analyzing them. Both lines of thought seem rational and realistic if a trifle too pat. But a merging of the two might also be an easy out. Perhaps unfortunately, my own inclination, is to fashion an answer which would satisfy both sides of the argument to a greater or lesser extent.

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It has been mentioned above that the composition of the factions does not correspond with religious cleavages. On the other hand the present picture does not indicate that the Peyotists who are active in politics play a role equal to that of the non-Peyotists. Although there are indications that prominent Peyotists have been active and vocal political leaders in the past this does not appear to be the case at the present. Whether the present picture is a significant one is too early to say.

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Peyotists express the difference between Peyote and Christianity by the phrase "Christianity is too difficult". This in spite of the similar ethics, the rigors of the Peyote meeting and the rigors of the older quests for power. What I think is involved here is 1) a fundamental difference in world view concerning the nature of man and his relation to the supernatural world and 2) the natural difficulty for a people to give up old ways and take on new ones, especially those new ways demanded by missionaries which frequently did not jibe with their own Christian teachings.

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According to my informants, Peyote has no concept of sin. That is, in spite of the fact that a Peyotist should not drink, murder, or whatever, he is not destroyed or cut off from Peyote if he does so. The ethics are felt to be good, if a man does not follow them he will incur the ill will of his neighbors and if he persists in his ways, will probably be an unhappy man. But he is neither condemned to hell nor is he denied the benefits of Peyote. Social sanctions there may be but no divine punishments. He is not cast out of the fold as it were. This is much different than Christianity with its supernaturally ordained edicts, the breaking of which precipitates both human and supernatural punishment which may even be irrevocable condemnation. The Christian sees man as being forever at the mercy of a higher being to whom he must pray for forgiveness, he is forever at a disadvantage.

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The Comanche feels that man is a small creature who must be borne up by the supernatural and who may suffer known consequences if he disregards specific directives in regard to the preservation of power, etc., but he is never an abject being who, by a human slip may lose his very humanity. It is considered (by older Peyotists) very difficult to give up this view of the self in return for the Christian view.

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C At this point some comparisons with the Christian communities
K may be made. On the surface the Christians represent a move toward
795 the White world while the Peyotists represent the last stronghold of
177 conservatism. While it is true that some Christian families have
consciously tried to assimilate and have used their Christianity as
one of the avenues of effort the majority of the Christians in the
rural areas do not consider their Christianity in the same light.
They do look upon Peyote as backward, some families have been able
to accept the Christian view concerning sin, etc. In general, however,
Christianity is just another church. There is no lack of identification
with Indian culture although there is not the same conscious
effort to preserve tradition except among the Kiowas who have been
reviving societies in a modified form. One of the big gripes the
Peyotists have against the Christian Indians is that they do not live
up to Christianity. That is, they claim to have accepted the "diffi-
cult" demands of the church but then act just like the Peyotists they
look down on. This is, in a way, an admission that the Christians are
still Indians in essence. It is this which leads one to look beneath
the surface dichotomy between the two religions which is most often
vocalized as the difference between assimilationists and conservatives.

C If anything impresses me in regard to the attitudes of the
K Indians I have met, it is the sustained reaction to the traumatic de-
829 feat at the hands of the Whites. The Indian is in a subordinate posi-
177 tion. He is not allowed to forget it, nor does he wish to when he
has a chance. The Indians believe themselves to be in a weaker
position than are the Negroes. And this, in Oklahoma, is not an
C objective /43/ assessment of the facts. In this situation where
K aggression is allowed no direct outlet both Christianity and Peyote
795 play a similar role. And if the White-Indian tensions are central to
177 the individual's life in any way (I believe they may be the prime
factor in many areas) then this similarity of roles may be more
important than the differences between the two faiths.

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Indians, both Christians and Peyotists believe themselves superior to the Whites. Their meek and agreeable role is a mask which is dropped the moment the Whites are out of sight. They take satisfaction in the success of their deception, in the gullibility of the Whites. They manipulate the Whites and further prove their superiority. But this is probably not enough to supply adequate satisfaction, there is a future date at which the tables will be turned. It is in this realm that both Christianity and Peyote perform an almost identical function.

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Because aggression is denied to both Christians and Peyotists alike, the non-aggression principles of the two faiths may be followed and the Indians feel that they are true to their faith while the White man is not. This will of course alleviate any guilt feelings due to suppressed aggression. But if the White man sins and the Indian does not then there is justice for the Christian in heaven and for both faiths, justice in the judgement day. The Peyotists' judgement day may be one trait taken bodily from Christian doctrine in tact. The descriptions I have had given me by Peyotists bode no good for Whites, and toned down as they are for my ears, the tone of voice is just a little unnerving. Moreover, Peyotists take every opportunity to mention this coming of the end to me in ominous tones and say that they are sure I get the point. Peyote symbolism has clothed the judgement day in Peyote clothes. During a normal ceremony the eagle bone whistle is blown within the tipi towards the east (passing out through the entrance). At the day of judgement the procedure will be reversed. The whistle (like Gabriel's horn I am told) will blow outside the tipi from the east toward the west. It will pass through the tipi passing out the rear of the tipi. The description of the strength and tone of that whistle is quite eerie. I have not been able to get many statements on the subject from Christians but only hints here and there.

452 When their money ran out before payment time, we would credit those who were not heavy drinkers until the next Grass Money time. Though all merchandise was charged to the husband, the wives bought in the same way. We followed the custom of keeping the sales slip for each wife's purchases with her name, but we were never called upon to show who bought what. I wondered whether the wives had an after-payment settlement.

432 The women always had a lot of fun buying dry goods. We kept yardsticks laid out along the dry-goods counter so that a woman could point to the particular bolt she was interested in. Each bought for herself and her children; but as each made her choices, the other wife or wives stood by the counter and passed remarks freely about her selections. These remarks always caused much merriment, not only within the group itself but also from other Indian women listening in.

177 One white custom at which the Comanche women never ceased
829 to wonder was the freedom with which white women would converse with men other than those of their own families. A homesteader's wife who had not talked to anyone but her husband for two weeks would come in plumb full of talk. As she was doing her buying, she would tell me all about the crops, the new calves or colts, and where she and her husband would be driving to church or a picnic the next day. In turn she would want to know all about what happened in town, who had had a baby, who had died, and all the gossip. Meanwhile Indian women who had, I knew, been to Carlisle or Chilocco would be listening very intently and talking in low tones to other women sitting near, apparently describing the conversation.

562 Comanche men and boys could scarcely help being vain, with all the attention the women and girls of the family bestowed upon them. This was especially apparent when the family as a whole was going to a gathering of any kind, white or Indian. The women would have the finest of shirts and neck scarves prepared for the husband and the boys to wear for the occasion. Often the shirt and bandana would be made from the finest red or pink silk. Nearly all the men wore 302 their hair long, and the husband would sport a new hairdo with strips 301 of otter skin or fancy yarn braided in with the hair to increase the 292 size of the braid. The white sheet that was rolled up and worn around the waist like a sash had been washed and sun-bleached until it was of a dazzling whiteness.

THE BONE-SETTER

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Let us review what we know concerning the Bone-setter. Dr. McLain insisted that the cowboy's work indicated he possessed surgical training. His stitches were put in with a surgical needle and catgut suture, and he had a limited supply of powdered calomel. Excepting for the powdered calomel, these things were unlikely appurtenances to be carried by an itinerant cowboy. With the circulation of these facts, the tongues of the curious wagged. 000

The only other testimony comes from Jim Martny, Earny interpreting. No one else acknowledged knowing the cowboy or having seen him. Nearby ranch-owners and their ranch hands would not admit to knowing any cowboy who could fill the bill. They knew of cowboys who had set a bone or two; but this was a multi-fracture, a wholesale affair, along with the job of cleaning and stitching Albert's scalp back in place, besides caring for the numerous horseshoe wounds.

Approximately in these words, with Earny translating, Jim told of 177 the cowboy, and he never varied from it: "Cowboy come to camp just 609 after white medicine man leave. Him say he hungry. We feed cowboy. Him say he cowboy medicine man. Him set Albert's bones. Cowboy ride away north.

"Him look like all cowboys look. All cowboys look alike. All have 829 mustache. All have big hat, high-heeled cowboy boots. All wear jeans pants and calico shirt. All have big gun in belt. All have good saddle.

"Horse him different. I tell about horse. Him sorrel so high," and 000 Jim pointed to his chin.

"Horse come long way. Horse tired. Cowboy tired. Horse have white face. One white foot." And Jim made the necessary motions to help Earny finish the description of the horse: blaze face, left front foot white.

There was never one word as to how the long afternoon progressed, other than the use of the yellow soap. This was one of the few specific questions Jim seemed to understand. Like most Indians of his day, he found "No savvy" a convenient way to dodge any question he didn't care to answer.

Never a word as to how the women behaved. No word as to when Albert regained consciousness—whether it was during the ordeal of having his bones set or afterward. He was conscious when Dr. McLain drove his buckboard out, the afternoon of the second day, to dress the wounds. This seems to have been an instruction from the cowboy, to have the white doctor come out the second day.